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Statement submitted by Stichting Rutgers WPF, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Moving forward to engage men and boys in the gender equality agenda

With this written statement RutgersWPF, member of the global MenEngage Alliance, provides suggestions on how to take the Beijing Platform for Action agenda forward, by engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality. The 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will also address opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda. We therefore also provide concrete recommendations for inclusion in the new global Post-2015 Development Agenda to maintain the momentum on addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights, and promoting women's empowerment.

We stand with gender equality and women's rights advocates to address continuing gender inequalities and women's human rights violations. Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the international community has achieved significant advances in the rights and well-being of women and girls — including in health, education, political participation, and income. But we are not there yet.

We believe that gender equality can only be achieved when underlying patterns related to patriarchy are transformed into values based on equality and through also engaging men and boys. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action includes engagement of men and boys as a critical piece for advancing gender equality. Beyond the nominal or symbolic involvement of men, the Beijing framework envisions male engagement as a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that regard heterosexuality as the norm, that sustain men's aggregate privileges, inequalities between women and men, and dominant male stereotypes.

We urge governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, and the private sector to move forward in joint efforts, challenging power dynamics that increase gender inequalities, including by actively engaging men and boys. Women's empowerment is essential to achieving gender equality. We must simultaneously engage men to be actively involved and committed to redistributing power and privilege in their personal lives and in larger spheres.

The following recommendations are based on the discussion paper "Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Review of Engaging Men in Gender Equality from Beijing 1995 to 2015" that was prepared for the 2nd worldwide MenEngage Global Symposium "Working With Men and Boys on Gender Justice" from 10-13 November 2014, New Delhi, India.

Recommendations

- Broaden the discussion about how gender norms affect both women and men. Throughout the world, there continue to be strong social and cultural norms that perpetuate power imbalances between men and women. While men usually have more agency than the women in their lives, men's decisions and behaviours are also profoundly shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations related to masculinity. Broadening the discussion to how gender norms affect men and women in all their (sexual) diversity, can help us to

better understand the complex ways that rigid gender norms and power relations burden our societies, and to more effectively engage men and boys in reflections about inequalities and change.

- Seek to understand and encourage men's various roles within the agenda for gender equality, including as gatekeepers, partners, stakeholders, and co-beneficiaries. Besides common framings of men's roles as gatekeepers or partners, there is evidence that we should also approach men as stakeholders and co-beneficiaries in advancing gender equality. In addition to broader ethical and social gains, men as individuals can have much to gain from increased equality. Viewing men as stakeholders in gender equality and crafting positive messages of opportunity and benefits can help to draw more men in.

- Build and act through alliances between men's work for gender equality and the women's rights fields and other social justice movements. Leaders and organizations in the field of gender equality should create ongoing dialogue and collaboration across the many diverse groups and movements involved in promoting gender equality. This requires women's empowerment and rights organizations, organizations working with men and boys, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer organizations, youth organizations, child rights organizations to find each other in common ground and to actively cooperate, pursuing a common cause. Many activists and organizations engaging men and boys already actively seek to align their work with women's movements.

- Take gender-inclusive work with men from the program and project level into policies and institutions. Over the last two decades since Beijing, initiatives that focus on or are inclusive of men as active participants and beneficiaries of gender equality have generally been short-term projects, often reaching relatively small numbers of men at a time, and often in contexts where social norms, policies, and other structural factors continue to limit the potential for broader transformations. Accelerating change requires reaching larger numbers of men and boys and changing systems and institutions. Given the critical role of public institutions in the creation and maintenance of gender norms, and their potential to reach large numbers of individuals, they provide particularly strategic locations for scaling up efforts to engage men and boys.

- Develop, implement and monitor policies to engage men in gender equality and build state capacity to implement them. There is a need to push forward with institutional and governmental policies that address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities. Equally important is the building of trained staff to implement policies, as well as ongoing public awareness campaigns to transform perceptions of gender roles among men.

- Employ research that seeks to understand the ways in which men and boys are already changing. Political activism and legislation are an important part of catalysing change. There is an additional need for increased research on the many ways in which men and boys are moving toward and living out gender equality, in order to identify ways to support and speed up the change that is already happening. This includes building knowledge on backlash; circumstances and contexts where masculinities and power relations are becoming more rigid, including conflict, high unemployment rates, and migration.

- Engage men in the prevention of gender-based violence. Integrated policies should include primary prevention, targeting men and boys; policies to engage men and boys in making public spaces free of violence for women and girls; programs, for men who have used violence, that are integrated with the judicial and social sector; implementation of gun control; control over alcohol sales; and legal, financial and psychosocial support for survivors of violence.

- Promote gender equitable socialization at all levels of education, from early childhood education to the tertiary level. Comprehensive, gender-transformative sexuality education should be an integral part of school curricula, including human rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Curricula should challenge gender stereotypes and encourage critical thinking. Teachers and administrators should be trained and supported to provide gender-sensitive learning environments.

- Engage men as fathers and caregivers. Besides more progressive paternity leave policies and training health care workers to positively involve men in pre-natal care services, there is a need for ongoing public awareness campaigns and education to transform perceptions of caregiving roles among men. Publicly supported fatherhood preparation courses and campaigns focusing on men's roles in the lives of children can address fathers' reported feelings of being unprepared for caregiving, and help men perceive benefits from greater participation.

- Engage men in supporting women's economic empowerment and commit men to an equal share in household and care work. A key policy entry-point for engaging men to support women's economic empowerment entails redistributing caregiving responsibilities, as an enabling factor for women in pursuing economic opportunities. Men also have an important role to play in advocating for and supporting policies to address inequalities in the workforce. Furthermore, the equal sharing of unpaid care work between men and women reduces the disproportionate share of unpaid care work for women and girls and changes attitudes that reinforce the gendered division of labour.

- Engage men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal, newborn and child health. We must continue to promote accessible sexual and reproductive health services and rights for women. We must also engage men and boys in transforming the rigid norms that shape sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Comprehensive sexuality education that promotes a critical reflection about gender norms is an essential component of engaging men and boys in sexual health. Policies should also seek to expand the availability and use of male methods, and create additional spaces for men to take responsibilities in prenatal and child health services.

Suggestions on targets and indicators to operationalize the above recommendations: http://menengage.org/resources/menengage-comments-open-working-group-draft-report-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs/.